

My name is Michelle Considine, I am a resident of Torrington and I work in the Torrington Area Probate Court, #23.

I'm sure you are aware of the role that the probate courts play in our community. We deal with people and families at the worst times in their lives. When loved ones die, become confused, abused or neglected.

These people need the personalization that they receive from the clerks and judges. The handholding as they struggle thru the application process, the uncertainty of what the future holds for them, for their children or the homes that they bought with their spouses 60 years ago and paid for with hard earned money only to lose their partner and now have to pay a fee for their death. The elderly that are becoming more confused as they get on in years and require some help managing their affairs but have no money to pay someone to assist them.

" Can you please help me? I forget sometimes to pay my bills. Is there someone that can help me? I don't have much money, I'm on a very strict income" So who helps these people? Who pays their conservators? Who pays their attorney so they don't get taken advantage of? Who pays the fee for the petition to protect their children, their grandchildren from abuse or neglect? The probate courts;and where does this money come from? Well lets see.... Our statutory probate fees have paid for some and the state budget has assisted as well.

Now unfortunately, the state feels that we no longer require their assistance, we're no longer allowed a line on the budget. Its been suggested that we just raise our fees to cover the difference.

Lets just take a look at the numbers.... before the fee changes the budget paid for 90% of Superior Court costs vs 25% of Probate Court costs. What's the cost difference between providing protection and services for people with mental illness or intellectual disabilities as opposed to these people ending up in instutionalized care(cost to the state) or worse, incarcerated(costs to the state). The elderly being provided with assistance of a conservator as opposed to their resourses being lost and ending up in nursing homes on Title 19, (cost to the state). Children being put in foster care(state cost) as opposed to finding guardianship and placement with relatives.

These cases are not lessening as time goes on, there are more and more people requiring assistance and the probate court needs to be there to help them.

The state is also saving money, alot of money, since the courts are housed in municipal buildings the state does not have to supply us with office space, furniture and office supplies.

All in all the state is getting a good deal with the probate courts and the citizens of Connecticut are benefitting as well. It seems we're doing our part to keeps costs down.

Im asking that you support the restoration of the general fund support to the probate court system because its good for the residents of Connecticut, the people we both work for.

If you have read through my plea, thank you for your time and consideration.